

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 remain pending in the application with the present amendments. In the Office Action, all claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,002,869 to Hinckley et al. ("Hinckley"). For the reasons set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that the presently amended claims are distinguished from Hinckley. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The pending claims include independent claims to a test automation tool (claim 1), a method of generating computer readable instructions for performing testing (claim 16) and a computer readable storage medium having instructions for performing such method (claim 20).

As amended herein, claim 16 now recites that the method is for verifying operability of a computing environment that is changed in relation to a first computing environment. As such, the generated computer readable instructions are for performing testing under a plurality of different test conditions that are defined by certain values of first and second attributes of the changed computing environment. Only the second attributes represent change from the first computing environment. As the first attributes of the computing environment have not changed from the first computing environment, the plurality of different test conditions need not include all possible values of the first attributes. Values of these attributes are obtained by automatically *sampling* a set of all possible values of the first attributes. As a result, the sampled values include substantially fewer values than a set of all possible values of the first attributes.

An advantage of the invention recited in claim 16 is limiting the volume of testing performed after changing a computing environment by recognition that not every possible value of every attribute need be tested.

By contrast, Hinckley describes the generation of test cases for testing software programs. Quite expectedly, Hinckley requires *all possible states* to be tested. (col. 9, Ins. 5-8; col. 13, ln. 4 *et seq.*). While Hinckley permits the transition from one state to one of several possible next states to be randomly determined (col. 15, Ins. 6-8), Hinckley neither teaches nor suggests that a plurality of test conditions to be performed are defined by *automatically sampled values* of certain attributes, where the sampled values include *substantially fewer values* than a set of all possible values of those attributes.

Similar recitations are found in claims 1 and 20, which distinguish those claims from Hinckley on at least the same basis as described above.

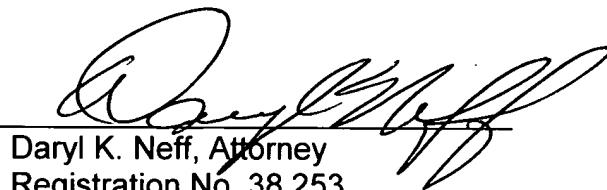
Support for the present amendments is provided, *inter alia*, at paragraphs [0021], [0045] and [0047]-[0050] of the Specification as well as the claims as originally filed.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for immediate allowance. If for any reason the Examiner has any question regarding the content of this amendment or the allowability of the presently pending claims, he is respectfully requested to contact the Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

It is believed that no fee is required upon filing this Amendment. However, if any fee is required, authorization is given to debit the Deposit Account No. 09-0463 of the Assignee for the amount due, and to credit any overpayment to the same account.

Respectfully submitted,
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